

Development of Effective Methods/Materials

Classroom Demo

Presenting at SPSP Teaching Preconference 2012 Teaching Blitz

The Desert Island Problem: Social Motives and Attraction

The Desert Island Problem is a great way of demonstrating to students how social motives can change the qualities we seek in a potential romantic partner. Students each generate a list of the top qualities they seek in a partner, first imagining themselves stranded on a desert island with this person for 1 week (rescue guaranteed), then, for 20 years. We then generate a class list and discuss similarities and differences in preferences across both social motive and gender. Generally, when your audience is not made up of social psychologists, this exercise reveals reliable differences across time (more focus on personality over physical compatibility in long-term scenario than short-term) and gender (men more focused on physical attributes than women in short-term scenario, but this difference is minimal in long-term scenario).

Why this activity is great:

1. Can be framed many ways to suit your lecture
 - a. Top-down processing
 - b. Reinforcement Theory (Kelley et al, 1983) and the P(erson) variables that determine what we find rewarding
 - c. Mating motives and mate preferences (work of Kenrick and Griskivicius)
2. Interactive nature sets expectations for participation early in the quarter
3. Helps build rapport and lightens the atmosphere of the class